CHRISTMAS ISSUE

The Sunday School Times

December 9, 1961 Volume 103, No. 49 (Lesson for December 24)

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"FROM THE SEVEN SEAS AND THE CONTINENTS!"

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INDONESIA: "We humbly ask your kindness to send us 3,000 of The Missing One-Third, 5,000 Hati si Adjang and 5,000 Chinese Heart of Shem." (Indonesian Missionary Training School.)

PERU: "We could handle up to 5,000 assorted tracts." (Association of Baptists for World Evangelism.)

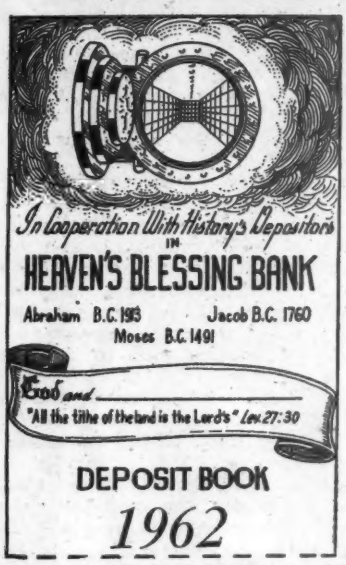
BRITISH GUIANA: "Kindly send the following material—1,000 Gospels of John, 1,000 Way of Life, 3,000 Missing One-Third, 3,000 Heart of Pak, 1,000 Needless Sacrifice and 1,000 Prisoner of Japan for free distribution." (Christian Catholic Church.)

JAPAN: "We hope it will be possible to load our truck and personally deliver these—1,000,000—tracts to many sections of Japan." (New Life League.)

CYPRUS: "To reach the children in all the schools with the Heart of Pak will require for printing $2,160." (Layman in airline service.)

MALAYA: "Please send the following—500 Heart of Pak, 150 Way of Life, 500 Wounds of Christ, 250 Praying Mother, 200 Gospels of John, 50 Bibles and 100 New Testaments." (South India Bible Institute.)

PHILIPPINES: "The Missing One-Third would be of great help to us in the ministry in the Philippines. I would request that if possible 5,000 copies be sent to me for free distribution." (Association of Baptists for World Evangelism.)



"THE MISSING ONE-THIRD"

What is this booklet for which requests took the entire 50,000 first edition printing in less than one month? It is a dynamic booklet on the New Birth that has been called "The clearest and sanest presentation of the teaching of the New Birth that has yet been written." You may have a sample copy simply by asking for it, and then quantities in amounts designated by you. Use the coupon herewith.

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The Sunday School Times

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Cover photo by H. Armstrong Roberts

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"Good Tidings of Great Joy."
Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20.

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RECORD REVIEWS

Houghton Choir Does Fine Work; New Carmichael Record Invites You To Sing

By ALFRED E. LUNDE

COLLEGE Choir on Parade.—Put a gold star in the crown of Audio Industries for the first in their Voices of Praise Series, *Alleluia*, by the Houghton College *a cappella* choir. Quality wise, this record has everything a hi-fidelity recording should contain, clearness, lack of surface noise, plus depth of sound truly reproduced.

Under the direction of Robert W. Woods, the Houghton choir sings with a blend and quality rarely heard in Christian college choirs today. The program is varied and each selection is sung with warmth and finesse.

You will enjoy such selections as Randall Thompson's "Alleluia" (the title song of the record), "My Lord, What a Mornin'," and Peter Lutkin's Choral Benediction, "The Lord Bless You and Keep You." Only a few minor things mar this choral presentation, mainly flatting in the middle section of "A Mighty Fortress" and "For All the Saints," and a shortness of phrase endings in "A Faithful Shepherd." These are unfortunate things which careful editing and another ten minutes of recording might have avoided.

All the numbers are timed on the record jacket, an added convenience for use on radio. [Audio Industries, LP No. AI 1003.] Side 1.—*Alleluia* (Thompson); *A Faithful Shepherd is My Lord* (arr. Stein); *Lost in the Night* (arr. Christiansen); *O Man, Thy Grief and Sin Bemoan* (Williams); *Advent Motet* (Schreck); *My Lord, What a Mornin'* (arr. Burleigh). Side 2.—*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* (arr. Mueller); *Breath of God* (Sateren); *Children of the Heavenly Father* (Myrvik); *O Worship the Lord* (Rachmaninoff); *For All the Saints* (Williams); *O Sing Unto the Lord* (Hassler); *Choral Benediction* (Lutkin).

Recommended Records for Christmas.—Handel's *Messiah*. (Sir Adrian Boult, conductor, with the London Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra. Four records. London No. A-4403.) *Happy Wanderer and Other Songs*. (Obernkirchen Children's Choir. Angel No. 65038.) *Christmas Songs*. (Obernkirchen Children's Choir. Angel No. 65021.) *Music of Christmas*. (Orchestra of Percy Faith. Columbia No. CL-1381, CS-8176.) *Hark the Herald Angels*. (Virgil Fox. Pipe organ. Capitol No. P-8531, SP-8531.) *Song and Christmas. Christmas Crib*. (Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians. Decca No. 8084.) *Hymns and Carols*. (Robert Shaw Chorale. Victor No. LM-2139, LSC-2139.) *Best of Christmas*. (Paul Michelson Orchestra and Choir. Victor No. LPM-1517.) *Christmas Hymns*. (George Beverly Shea. Victor No. LPM-1270.) *Christmas Hymns*. (George Beverly Shea. Victor No. LPM-2064, LSP-2064.)

Sing Along With Ralph.—Here is the ideal Christmas gift for a shut-in or anyone who loves unadulterated familiar gospel music. With men's chorus, piano, and organ, Ralph Carmichael invites the listener to sing along with the recording and provides four song sheets with each record. From last month's reviews, you know I am in favor of song books being sold with records. However, here is a case where every tune is familiar and all that is needed are the words to unfamiliar stanzas of such favorites as "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," "It Is Well With My Soul," "When We All Get to Heaven," and many more.

Within thirty seconds after listening to the first side of this record, I was singing along. The compelling force of this music, which draws the listener into the spirit of singing, is uncanny. There are no lush arrangements or flashy accompaniments. These are good old gospel songs as their composers undoubtedly intended them to be sung. Some musicians think that the more they can disguise a gospel melody through spectacular arrangements, the better it is. However, this record represents purism; I'm for more of it. [Christian Faith Recordings, No. 1391.] Side 1.—*Leaning On the Everlasting Arms; There Shall Be Showers of Blessing; I Am Praying for You; My Redeemer; It Is Well With My Soul; Shall We Gather at the River?* Side 2.—*We're Marching to Zion; 'Tis So Sweet To Trust in Jesus; God Will Take Care of You; Amazing Grace; When We All Get to Heaven; Wonderful Words of Life.*

For Youngsters From Four to Twelve.—Ethel Barrett, the story lady, has produced Vol. 4 of her delightful stories for children. This recording relates the dramatic tales, *Buzz Bee, The Man Who Believed God, Justice Plus, Trouble in a Storm, The Prophet Who Panicked*, and *Writing on the Wall*. With organ background, sound effects, and Ethel Barrett's flexible voice, these stories, three Bible and three fiction, come to life.

Recently a large department store started broadcasting a three-minute telephone story for children to enable Mother to take a coffee break. Here is a record to accomplish the same thing. These Christian stories, well told, will keep your children occupied for twenty to forty minutes on rainy days, especially if the stories are saved for these special occasions.

(Continued on page 977)

THE TIMES News Survey

• **WCC Accepts Russian Church.**—The World Council of Churches, meeting in New Delhi, India, has accepted into its membership the Russian Orthodox Church, which often appears to be merely a tool of the Soviet government. Orthodox churches from three other Iron Curtain countries were also accepted: Poland, Bulgaria, and Rumania. A total of 23 churches were accepted, most of them from Africa and Asia. Of these, two are Pentecostal churches from Chile, the first Pentecostal bodies to be admitted to the WCC. There were more votes against admission of the Pentecostals than against the Russian Church. The first formal action of the third assembly was the integration of the International Missionary Council, with its 33 national councils, with the WCC. Hereafter, the missionary body will function as the division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council. A memorandum sent to those attending the WCC meeting gave some interesting advice: "It would be wise to limit the use of alcohol and tobacco, to avoid extravagant spending and to accept with serenity any small discomforts or difficulties which one may encounter. . . . It is an important part of the religious tradition of India that the life of devotion to God involves a real renunciation of things of the world." It added that many Christians do not fit this pattern. The memorandum said further, "If we are to make that claim (Jesus, the light of the world) clearly and effectively in our meeting, we shall have to do it humbly, remembering that many of us are identified in the minds of most Indians with a 'Christian' civilization which flouts the teachings of Jesus." Judging from the early sessions, it is apparent that the World Council continues to represent doctrinal compromise.

• **Catholic House Speaker?**—Some observers are predicting that the selection of a new Speaker for the House of Representatives will stir a religious controversy. The late Speaker Sam Rayburn was a Free Will Baptist. The most likely successor is Rep. John W. McCormack, of Massachusetts, who is a Roman Catholic. In addition to a Roman Catholic President, there would then be Catholics in the two key congressional posts. Sen. Mike Mansfield, the Senate majority leader, is also a Catholic. A spokesman for Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State has pointed out that for many years Rep. McCormack has been the foremost champion on Capitol Hill of the Catholic bishops' position on separation of church and state.

• **Christian Witness at 1962 World's Fair.**—From April 21 through October 21, 1962, Seattle, Wash., will be host to the Century 21 World's Fair, the first official, world-recognized world's fair to be held in the U. S. since 1939. A group known as "The Christ for the World Committee" has purchased ground at the fair site and will erect a $150,000 building there. The Moody Institute of Science will present daily "Sermons from Science" lectures. The committee has also planned for religious counseling services with an all-out effort for personal evangelism.

• **Catholics Gain in Protestant North Ireland.**—Preliminary census figures have shown a sharp increase in the Roman Catholic population of Northern Ireland, long a Protestant stronghold. The statistics reveal a 5.4 per cent increase in the Catholic population in 10 years, amounting to more than half of the total population increase of the country. During the same period, the predominant Protestant denomination, the Presbyterians, showed only a slight increase, while the Anglican Church suffered a large decrease.

• **Protestants Make Great Gains in Latin America.**—A newly published survey by the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association reveals that Protestantism in Latin America has increased more than 700 per cent since 1937. Although the editors of the survey were unable to get figures from some independent groups, their figures show that there were 3,441,415 baptized Protestant Church members in Latin America in 1960. In 1937 there were 422,395. Colombia, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Ecuador out-paced the over-all average with an increase of more than 1,000 per cent for each country. The new survey reveals that there are 297 mission-related hospitals and clinics, as compared with 60 in 1937. There are 47 mission presses and 224 Christian bookstores. In 1937 there were 42 Bible schools and seminaries. Today there are 244.

Next Week . . .

The Miracle of Christmas: Cleansing and Rest. By Alan Redpath, pastor of Moody Memorial Church, Chicago.

Books To Use With Next Year's Lessons. By H. Phillip Hook, Philadelphia College of Bible.

Editorial: Grasshoppers or Giant Killers?

EDITORIALS

God's Christmas Message

THERE will be many messages this Christmas. Christmas is a time for exchanging greetings and for writing that once-a-year note to distant friends and relatives. In a sense, all of Christmas is a message.

Christmas is a message from God to man. God has spoken finally and authoritatively in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God the Son. God communicated to man in the fullest way possible by becoming man. The Lord of glory became one of us.

> Who is He in yonder stall,
> At whose feet the shepherds fall?
> 'Tis the Lord! oh wondrous story!
> 'Tis the Lord! the King of glory!
> At His feet we humbly fall
> Crown Him! crown Him, Lord of all!
> —Benjamin R. Hanby

This is God's message to us at Christmas. But this is not the end of it. The Christmas message, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, is more than a fact of history; it is more than a theological formula; it is a personal message to you and to me.

God did not speak merely to establish the fact that He could become man. The unique and thrilling thing about this particular event in history and about God's message on that first Christmas Day is that it is a message by which men can be saved.

God's Christmas message is not just an announcement or a greeting; it is a message that demands obedience and faith such as is not demanded by any other fact or person of history. "Hear ye Him," is the word of God that accompanies the Christmas message.

Ever since the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ the essence of Christianity has been a message. "Go and preach," He told the disciples. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," He said. "I declare unto you the gospel . . . by which also ye are saved," the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:1, 2).

Peter's experience with Cornelius is a vivid example of the message in action. The Holy Spirit told Cornelius that Peter would come and tell him "words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). What was the result of the message? "Repentance unto life" (11:18). This is the purpose of God's Christmas message to you: new life in Jesus Christ.

The thoughts of millions of people will be about religion during the Christmas season. But this is not the real question. The real issue is life. God's message in Jesus Christ is intended to bring life. Men who are dead in trespasses and sin can be made alive in Jesus Christ.

God's message brings life; it also brings gladness. This is a quality many will try to produce at Christmas by entertaining friends, sharing gifts, and indulging in food and drink. What was it that brought gladness to the heart of a man like Barnabas, a man "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith"? It was seeing the grace of God work in the lives of people (Acts 11:23).

Christians who have received life by faith in the Lord Jesus can receive new gladness this Christmas by bearing the message of God and His love in Christ. This will produce real gladness at Christmas.

It is a time to examine our own hearts; it is a time to proclaim God's message. It is a time to rejoice; it is a time to cleave unto the Lord with steadfast purpose.

Questions on Evangelism

IN RECENT years as more and more churches and pastors have been involved in great city-wide evangelistic crusades in the United States and abroad, two questions have been asked: what can our little church do all by itself? and, where do you draw the line in efforts to get people out to hear the Gospel?

About the first question there is little doubt that churches have been amazed at how complicated modern evangelism can be. This is not a question of whether such machinery is right or wrong, but what can be done in their church without it.

We believe that much organization is needed for a city-wide campaign. Organization is also needed for a local effort. People can work together as a team. A local church ought to set a target that is attainable with the resources it has. The main thing is to get people occupied in evangelism. Some people are faithful personal witnesses. Others need the spirit of a campaign and a team effort to get them involved. But no church should leave the responsibility of evangelism undone because it cannot muster all the resources of a city-wide crusade. God's calling is God's enabling, and we know that it is His will for the church and for His people to evangelize.

The second question is more difficult. Much harm has been done by Christians accusing others of using illegitimate and unscriptural methods in evangelism. No doubt some methods have been in error. We do not believe that evangelism is the end that justifies anything to attain it. We do not believe that a church or an evangelist can say that as long as the Gospel is being preached and people are being saved it does not matter how you go about it.

Some evangelistic advertising does misrepresent the facts. Some promotion is an obvious attempt to attract numbers. In the end, this does more harm than good, to say nothing of the fact that it is contrary to the will and Word of God. The Apostle Paul said that his life and witness in the world and among believers was "in simplicity and godly sincerity" (2 Cor. 1:12). In Christian service three things must be subject to God's will: what we do (our objective), how it is done (our method), and when it is to be done.

God is holy and righteous. He is the God of truth. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. God expects us to glorify Him and to represent His righteousness and holiness, not only by what we do but also by how we do it. Worldly methods and base means can never be justified by objectives and results, no matter how glorious. There must be nothing of the flesh, nothing of man, nothing of this world. God's will cannot really be God's will if it is not carried out in God's way.

The Ultimate Godsend

By the Rev. ROBERT N. OERTER, Jr.

Mr. Oerter, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Fresno, California, describes in vivid terms the reality of Christ's coming, the motive and the purpose, with a meaningful application that can transform Christmas for you.

ONE of the most obvious facts of the Bible is the fact that God is a God of action. We need to remember this always, because there are times when people feel that God is not able to act or is not willing to act.

Recently someone said to me, "I don't think that there is any sense in praying at all. Nothing seems to happen when I pray." Yet it is true that God *does* hear prayer and God *does* answer prayer, perhaps not always to our specifications, but God is a God who does act.

Some people think of God as being remote. They think of God as being far off beyond the farthest star, and that somehow God is not able to mix in with our life, to be active in our life. Nevertheless, the entire Bible stresses the fact that God *does* act; God *does* move; God accomplishes things. There is the reality of creation, where we see God's activity in making the material universe with all that it entails. There is God's providential care in which He does not even suffer a sparrow to fall to the ground without His knowledge and will. Wherever we look in the Bible we find that God is a God of activity. It seems to me that there is a word in the English language that expresses this activity of God with great beauty. The word is *godsend*.

God Is the One Who Acts

The word *godsend* implies a direct activity upon God's part. God is the one who moves and God is the one who acts. A godsend is a desirable and needed blessing from God. Of course there are many godsends in life; some of them great big godsends; some of them little godsends, and one of them the ultimate godsend.

For instance, in your own life, have you ever been in the very extremity of need when you have not known where to turn or what to do, and suddenly God *sends* someone or something to your aid? A new insight, a new power, or a new help intervenes. Maybe it is a financial need, and you think, "How in the world will I ever get through this particular month?" But something happens. Perhaps a check comes unexpectedly, or a return comes in that you had written off as a bad debt, or something else. But God *sends* the answer to your financial need. Or, perhaps, it may be that you are at the very edge of despair, and you wonder whether you can endure another day, and then God *sends* you fresh resources for the day. Perhaps you do not jump up and click your heels, but at least God gives you enough to make it through the day. For you, in that particular circumstance, that is a godsend. Maybe it is not as big as you would have guessed or read of in a book, but it was big enough for you to meet the day with God's help.

My family and I had a little godsend recently. The six of us were up near Mono Crater, on a road traveled by perhaps one or two cars an hour. I had parked on one side of the road with safety and ease, but when I turned the car around to start back in the direction from which we had come, I got stuck on the other side of the road. I rocked the car and it got in still deeper. As I hesitated a few moments, I looked up the road and saw a car approaching. Fortunately the driver was willing to stop, and still more fortunately, a very husky husband and wife in the car were not adverse to physical exertion. With the help of everyone pushing, and my seven-year-old girl steering, we got back on the road. Well, that was a godsend—not a very big one, but a godsend. I quietly said, "Thank you" to God for these friends who came along to help us in need. A godsend.

But the godsend that we wish to emphasize is much larger than anything we have experienced by way of providential care. It is greater than the experience of creation; it is God's *ultimate* godsend. When God came to give to us the ultimate gift, God sent His Son. This is God's costly, precious Christmas gift.

The Gospel of John is filled with the reality of God's ultimate godsend. Sixteen times in this Gospel we find that Jesus Christ is described as having been "sent" by God. Jesus Christ is God's ultimate gift, God's ultimate intervention, God's ultimate break-through. When God wanted to come and mix right in with our life, God did not send a neat definition of Himself; God did not send a spiritual gimmick; He did not send a rule book; God came, Himself! God, if you like, camped on our doorstep; God stepped on our threshold; God came and knocked at *our* door in the person of Jesus Christ Himself. This is Christmas reality.

So the ultimate godsend, the thing most desirable and most needed, is God Himself. God fulfilled our yearning and need when the star shone and the baby cried.

Christ, Sent From God

The text that I would like to stress particularly is John 7:28 and 29 where we find these words: "Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me." Jesus Christ, the godsend!

I would like to stress three things about this supreme godsend. First of all, the reality of the godsend. This word "sent" is in the aorist tense in the Greek. The aorist tense points to a specific point in the past. It is what we call the punctiliar tense; it points to a special time, a definite time, a concrete time. When God *sent* His Son, it was specific. It was just as specific as to say that John Foster Dulles was Secretary of State under the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower. It is just that definitely rooted in history. "Born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate." Christianity is concretely in history. We must stress always the reality of the godsend, that God did not ooze into history; God *broke* into history, God *invaded* history in a very specific way. He did not come as a guess of men; He did not come as a mystic idea, but He came in the flesh. This is what we mean by the Incarnation—that God in all of His spaciousness, all of His vastness; the Lord who is Spirit without body, this Lord accommodated Himself to our need. He limited Himself to become a servant of a body. He invaded space and time. The Lord who whirled the galaxies into existence and created the little planet that we call the earth visited this planet. He came and He showed His face to this planet. God established

Song of the Bells

By E. Margaret Clarkson

THE bells ring out at Christmastide
Glad tidings of the Saviour's birth,
Flinging their message far and wide,
"Goodwill to men, and peace on earth!"

But on the earth is no true peace,
Nor man's goodwill to man is found:
When shall her age-old warfare cease,
And when shall peace on earth be found?

While men pursue their selfish way
With power and pride and gold their king,
Vainly for peace shall nations pray,
And vainly bells their carols ring.

When men shall turn to Bethlehem
And bow before the Son of God,
When hearts shall truly worship Him,
Then shall His peace be shed abroad,

Then shall goodwill be born on earth—
For joy the bells of Heaven shall ring—
When in their hearts men give Christ birth
And own the Prince of Peace their King.

a beachhead at Bethlehem. This was and is the glorious reality of God's intervention.

Now men before this had dreamed about incarnation. They had talked about it. They had fabricated mythological stories. The Greeks had a tremendous number of stories about how gods came to earth and did incredible things when they sported around in Greece, but Christianity is not mythology, it is history.

We divide history by this reality. Recently one of the children asked, "What does A.D. mean?" A.D. means "In the year of our Lord" (*anno Domini*) and B.C. means before Christ. We divide history by the reality of the godsend. Jesus Christ is come! God does that which is impossible; God does that which is almost incredible; God Himself steps into time. The timeless One becomes a servant. The One who knows no bounds in love binds Himself and comes to us in our need.

Christ Is Real

This is a stubborn fact that will not dislodge from history, although there are some people who like to evade the fact. There are some people who refuse to give adult consideration to Jesus Christ. They dismiss Him with a flick of the mind, but Jesus Christ will not be thus dismissed. Jesus Christ is a reality; a reality of history and a reality of conscience, and ultimately He finds us to our joy or to our dismay.

Jesus Christ is a reality that cannot be dismissed. You may try to avert your eyes from Jesus Christ, but ultimately everyone will be faced by Jesus Christ, and you either face Him now or you face Him later. How much better to face Him now with joy and in answering love, for you may know Jesus Christ today by faith.

The second thing about this supreme or ultimate godsend, stressing not only the reality of the godsend, is the motive of the godsend. What was behind this breakthrough into time? What was it that moved the Lord to come to us? Was it because we had some prior claim upon Him? Was it because we were just so lovely that He could not resist paying a visit? Was it that we were so unusual in our talents that the Lord just had to see us firsthand? Why did He come?

You know the answer to this so well. The only reason He came was because our Lord is love; love brought Him. Nothing else would have brought Him, only the outreaching, purposeful, deliberate sacrificial giving of Himself could bring Him to earth.

We have had a wonderful person as Assistant Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church for over forty years, Henry Barraclough. He wrote a hymn that has not been used so much recently, but it is a lovely one. It is called "Ivory Palaces." In this hymn Dr. Barraclough says: "My Lord has garments so wondrous fine, and myrrh their texture fills; its fragrance reached to this heart of mine, with joy my being fills. Out of the ivory palaces, into a world of woe; Only His great eternal love made my Saviour go." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Love brought the Christmas Gift.

I knew a little girl in Syracuse, New York, about six years of age. One day coming home from church she said to her mother, "Mamma, Mr. Oerter loves me." Her mother looked at her and smiled and she asked, "Beverly, why do you say that?" Beverly said, "Well, Mother, I know Mr. Oerter loves me because this morning when I went out and said 'Good morning' to him, he stooped all the way down and looked me in the face, and said 'Good morning, Beverly,' and, Mother, he wouldn't have done that if he did not love me. He would not have bothered."

I often think of this with a splash of sentimentality, because of the warmth of that situation for me. But then I put it in a larger context, and I think, "Isn't this something like our Saviour's coming?" Isn't this the way He came to us? He was concerned about us. He was interested in us, and He stooped to our level. He stooped to our level! He came to look us in the face. He came to show us the Father. He came to redeem us. He came to show us Himself. What made Him do it? Love! Love is the only thing that causes that kind of stooping. Who could bridge the gulf so vast except a Lord willing to humble Himself?

But I want to advance our thought one step further. The motive of the godsend is love. What is the purpose of this godsend? Why did God, in love, send Himself? The answer to this you also know, and it is very clear from Scripture. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that Jesus Christ came to save sinners: Presbyterian sinners, Baptist sinners, any kind of sinners. Jesus Christ came to save sinners.

Saved From Sin and Self

The word *saved* is still a source of embarrassment to some people, because some have pounced upon it as the only Biblical term to describe our redemption. Many people are afraid to use the word *saved*, but the word is richly meaningful. It involves rescue and fulfillment. During recent treacherous forest fires in California some people were burned. Most of the people were saved. They were rescued. Christian salvation means that we are rescued from our sin and from our sins, from our self-absorption, from our self-pity, from our weakness, from our stumbling, from ourselves. Jesus Christ came to rescue us, because we were in perilous need, and only the intervention of God could liberate us from our self-absorption. Only God's breakthrough could help us to be what we ought to be. We cannot make it alone. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot rescue ourselves any more than a drowning man can pull himself to shore. God Himself must come and rescue us.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," says Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Jesus Christ said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). So the purpose of the godsend is that you and I may be saved. If you will pardon my extreme directness, "Are *you* saved?"

I did not ask you if you were a member of a church. I did not ask whether you were a good, decent chap, or a lovely lady. I asked you, are you saved? Or to put it in other words, have you, as best you know your own heart, come to Jesus Christ to trust in Him as your Saviour and Lord? The ultimate godsend is God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ. God has redeemed the world, and the effects of that redemption are still with us.

God Seeks the Lost

This great act of God's intervention has consequences today, because God still reaches for you and for me in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. God still desires that we should answer His love with faith and trust and responding love.

No one can answer this inward question for you. You must answer it yourself. It is a marvelous thing that God has given to us the very thing that we desire and need most, forgiveness and understanding and the presence of God. He has given this to us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

I hope that the ultimate godsend will be received and appreciated and enjoyed by everyone who reads these words. Stop now, at Christmastide. Look beyond the tinseled gifts of men and behold God's gift for you, Jesus Christ.

Our Father, we thank Thee that when Thou didst come to us, that Thou didst not bring a rule book, a tantalizing example, some spiritual technique, or device, but we thank Thee that Thou didst come to reveal Thyself in personal form in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that we may come this day, and receive Thy godsend, Thy Son, our Lord. Wilt Thou, who dost search the hearts of all men, search the hearts of each of us from the youngest to the oldest, that we may be found in faith, not possessing righteousness of our own, but that which is a gift from our Lord. Then help us, our Father, to walk in newness of life before Thee. We pray that the result of Thy godsend shall be joy and peace through believing. In the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen!

It is the misery of this world that so many who are fit for public stations are buried in obscurity, and so many who are unfit for them are preferred to them.
—Matthew Henry.

The Christmas Canticles

By ARTHUR PETRIE, Th.D.

Mary, Elisabeth, Simeon, Zacharias, the angels: what do they say to us today?

In these songs from the Gospel of Luke Dr. Petrie finds a wealth of meaning. They were inspired by the Holy Ghost, Christ-centered, and honoring to God's faithfulness. They also picture future glory and blessing for the Saviour and His people.

THE Christmas canticles are those songs sung by some of the persons connected with the first Christmas season, the season of the incarnation of Christ. They are known as the "Magnificat" of Mary, the "Benedictus" of Zacharias, and the "Nunc Dimittis" of Simeon. These names were given because in the Latin translation each song begins with the word or words above given. With these Christmas canticles I am also including the words of Elisabeth and the angels, spoken in connection with the incarnation of Christ. These canticles are the first recorded songs of the Christian Era. They are the most memorable and famous we have. They are the inspired utterances of the Holy Spirit.

The Words of the Spirit

It was after the Angel Gabriel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," that Mary sang the Magnificat, beginning, "My soul doth magnify the Lord . . ." Most certainly the Holy Ghost was the inspirer of the words of that song of Mary.

The Holy Ghost spoke through Elisabeth to Mary. The record says, "And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:41, 42).

The song of Zacharias was inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God was the author of it. "And . . . Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied" (1:67). The Angel Gabriel, who brought to Zacharias the message connected with the Incarnation most certainly spoke the inspired word of God. He said: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings" (1:19). The same angel "was sent from God" to the Virgin Mary, and most assuredly his message to her in Luke 1:26-37 was God's message.

The "angel of the Lord" who appeared to the "shepherds abiding in the field" spoke to them the words of God, as recorded in Luke 2:10, 11. The words of the "heavenly host" recorded in Luke 2:14 were also the inspired words of God.

Simeon's song was inspired by the Spirit of God, for we read that "the Holy Ghost was upon him," and that "it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ"; and furthermore that "he came by the Spirit into the temple" (2:25-27). Therefore by the Spirit of God he gave the famous Nunc Dimittis. Three times the inspiration of the Spirit of God is emphasized in that Christmas canticle. All the songs and messages connected with the Christmas season were Heaven-born, given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Christmas canticles and messages were Christ-centered: they were spoken because of Christ. Gabriel's message to Zacharias was centered in Christ. John, the son to be born to Zacharias, was to "go before him [Christ] in the spirit and power of Elias," and to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:17). Gabriel's message to Mary was all about Christ; He was the subject of it. Elisabeth's greeting to Mary was centered in Christ (1:42-45). Zacharias's famous Benedictus is full of Christ (1:67-79). One needs only to read the words of the angel to the shepherds to certify the fact that his message was wholly centered in Christ (2:10, 11). And Simeon's song, like the others, is centered in Christ. Christ Himself is the theme and center of those wonderful Christmas canticles and messages.

Since they are Christ centered, they teach the following facts about Christ. He would be virgin-born. When Mary asked about that, she received the answer: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (1:35).

They teach also that Christ is the Son of God. He is that in a unique sense, as no other ever is nor can be. He is therefore the "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). He had a virgin mother. He did not have a human father. That is one of the clear teachings of these Christmas canticles and messages connected with the incarnation of Christ.

Christ, the Lord

A number of times in these songs Christ is called Lord. That word is certainly the equivalent of the Old Testament name, Jehovah. Elisabeth called Him "Lord" in saying to Mary, "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43.) Zacharias, "filled with the Holy Ghost," said of John the Baptist, "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways" (1:67, 76). The Angel Gabriel called Him "Christ the Lord." Albert Bengel says of that title, "Magnificent appellation!" Dean Alford says of the name, Lord: "And I see no way of understanding this *Kurios* (Lord), but as corresponding to the Hebrew JEHOVAH." Since Jehovah means the Becoming One, it is appropriate that Jesus is called in His incarnation by the name meaning just that. He "became [*egeneto*] flesh" (John 1:14). Concerning this title, "Christ the Lord," Matthew Henry writes: "He is God, for *the Lord*, in the Old Testament, answers to *Jehovah*." Mysterious? Yes, but true! What a Christ He is compared with the Christ of Unitarianism and the Christ of the New Theology and the Christ of Modernism!

The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that before his death he would see the long-promised Messiah. That is another name given the virgin-born Son of Mary. There is only one Messiah, and He is the one promised throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, from Genesis 3:15 to Malachi 4:2. He is the one who came in the person of Jesus. The angel called Him "Christ the Lord," and the Holy Ghost called Him "the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:11, 26). *Christ* is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Messiah*.

God's Faithful Promises

The Christmas canticles and sayings set forth the trustworthiness of the promises of God and the faithfulness of God. In her song, Mary states that the "great things" God did to her were done according to the promises of God, "as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever" (1:49, 55). Zacharias in his song expresses the same precious truth: the coming of Christ into human history, with its multiplied blessings, is in accordance with the promises of God: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham" (1:68-73).

Zacharias practically tells us that the coming of Christ was a fulfillment of all the promises of God concerning that event: it was all done "as he spake." I like to think that since God performed His promises to bring Christ into the world the first time, He most certainly will fulfill His promises to bring Him into the world the second time. We shall see that promise fulfilled, "For yet a very little while, he that cometh shall

come, and shall not tarry" (Heb. 10:36, 37, A.S.V.).

Not only do the canticles and sayings concerning the incarnation of Christ show Old Testament prophecy fulfilled, they are themselves full of prophecies to be fulfilled, prophecies of great and momentous events. Look at the statement of the Angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:31-33. It contains seven "shalls." The last three have never yet been historically fulfilled; they are definitely prophetic, and must yet be accomplished. Gabriel prophesied this of Jesus: "And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David" (v. 32). He never received that throne in the days of His flesh in His ministry to Israel, but He shall yet receive it, and fulfill both the prophecy of Gabriel and the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 9:7. Gabriel also said of Jesus, "And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (v. 33). Notice he did not say Israel, but Jacob, because it means the natural seed, not the spiritual, of Jacob, the people of the twelve tribes of Jacob. One might spiritualize the name Israel, but you cannot spiritualize the name Jacob. The last of the seven "shalls" is, "And of his kingdom there shall be no end" (v. 33).

The canticle of Simeon contains prophecy of future good. He said of the Lord's Christ that He would be "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (2:32). That is being partly fulfilled now; its complete fulfillment is in the future kingdom age, when the prophecy of Isaiah 49:6 will be realized: "I will also give thee [Christ] for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The other part of Simeon's prophecy reads, "And the glory of thy people Israel." That was not fulfilled to Israel in the days of the incarnation of Christ; it will be in the coming age. Then God will say: "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isa. 46:13). Then it will be said to Israel: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee . . . the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (60:1, 2, 3, 19).

Record Reviews

(*Continued from page 971*)

The reason for putting the lower age limit at four is the fact that some of the terminology Miss Barrett uses probably is beyond the comprehension of the nursery age child. If you have not heard any of Ethel Barrett's stories, you owe it to yourself to have at least one of her records in your library. Volumes 1, 2, and 3 are also available. [Christian Faith Recordings, No. 7073.]

The Rapture First—3.

By the Rev. DOUGLAS M. WHITE

FINALLY, the association of the children of God with the wrath of His indignation cannot be reconciled with the ultimate purpose of God.

There is the heavenly relationship. The ultimate objective and purpose of God in the creation and redemption of man is to have a people for Himself. The great heart of the loving God will never be fully and completely satisfied until that love is requited. This desire will be fully realized when He gathers His people out of this world. Of Israel He said: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Exod. 19:4). Through the apostle of love we have the statement of Jesus: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3). Then the Apostle Paul points out that Jesus Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). The whole movement of God in human history is directed toward that great homecoming of the saints, when we "shall be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

Then it is that Paul goes on to say that "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:9). The salvation spoken of here is, of course, the final and complete salvation of the entire being, which can be realized only when the body is redeemed from the curse of sin, and made like unto His glorious body. The Rapture and the Resurrection are indissolubly linked together, they are simultaneous, and must precede the time when the wrath of God shall be unleashed. "We [the saints] shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). Then, while the events described in Revelation four through nineteen continue to unfold, constantly building up to the final deluge of divine wrath, we shall be with our blessed redeemer and bridegroom. While the world is reeling under the impact of holy wrath, the saints will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive their rewards.

Then—and not until then—"the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints" (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

What point would there be in catching up His saints and setting them right back down again? What opportunity would there be for the carrying out of the previously mentioned plans for His bride? The only way in which these plans can be carried out is for the Church to be raptured before the Tribulation begins. This all coincides with the divine revelation of His sovereign purposes for the redeemed, which stem from divine mercy, and are extended to all who will believe, through His marvelous grace. In other words, the Rapture before the wrath (any part of it) is in perfect harmony with His purpose, which will inevitably be carried out.

There is also the earthly relationship. The saints at Thessalonica were fearful and afraid. Apparently there were those who were predicting the likelihood of their being participants in the outpouring of heavenly wrath. Thus Paul wrote to comfort them. Among other things he pointed out the fact that, while there would be a time of great tribulation (unparalleled in history) when the Antichrist would have dominion, it could not take place as long as the body of Christ is upon the earth (2 Thess. 2:3-7). "For the mystery of lawlessness—that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority—is already at work in the world, (but it is) restrained only until he who now restrains is taken out of the way" (Amplified New Testament, v. 7).

Jesus said that the saints are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." Salt is a great preservative, and there can be no life or growth without light. History shows that where Christianity has thrived, there wickedness has been restrained and limited, though not eliminated. Satan is ready now to take advantage of an almost unlimited opportunity for a universal rampage, but is restrained from doing so by a contrary influence upon the earth. Just as Satan does his pernicious work through human instruments, so does God in the person of the Holy Spirit operate to the redemption of a lost world and the improvement of society, the latter being a by-product of the main objective. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16.) Therefore, until the saints are removed from the earth Satan will be incapable of completing his sinister plans of deception and destruction. In other words, the removal of the Church will precipitate the Tribulation.

About two miles above the community in which I live there is a large federal flood control project. A huge reservoir, covering many square miles of territory and containing many millions of gallons of water, has been

(*Continued on page 989*)

Lesson 13
December 24

International Uniform Lesson

"GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY"

Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20; printed text, Luke 2:1-16

Golen Text.—And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.—Luke 2:10, 11

THE KING JAMES VERSION

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

2 (*And* this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *shall* be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

Lessons based on International Sunday School Lessons; the International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching, copyrighted by International Council of Religious Education.

The Lesson as a Whole

By C. Ernest Tatham

Approach to the Lesson

ALTHOUGH Micah the prophet had predicted some seven centuries earlier that the Messiah would be born in David's city of Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2), as the time approached, there seemed little likelihood of any literal fulfillment. The chosen maiden who was to be the mother lived in Nazareth, many miles to the north. She was poor, and traveling was both costly and dangerous. Furthermore, her physical condition made such a journey hazardous.

In view of all this, it certainly appeared that any prospects of the Babe being born outside of Nazareth were remote.

Jehovah, however, had spoken. The Son of God was to be born in the royal city of the famous King David. No word of His could become void, no prophecy miscarry. God moved upon the spirit of the emperor, heathen though he was, causing him to issue a directive that the entire Roman world should be taxed. Because Mary and her fiance, Joseph, were both descendants of David's house, they found it necessary to travel southward to Bethlehem. While in that town the divine Babe was born. Thus the ancient prophecy was completely honored, and hope provided for the fulfillment of all predictions for the future.

Verse by Verse

Luke 2:1.—"*And . . . in those days . . . there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*" Caesar Augustus was the Roman emperor, and his authority extended through the entire Roman Empire, or the known civilized world. Actually the decree called for a census or registration, not a taxation. However, taxation usually followed such a census.

Verse 2.—"(*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria*)." History indicates that the actual enrollment was not carried into effect until some ten years after the edict had gone forth.

Verse 3.—"*And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.*" The political machinery that was now set in motion sent everyone back to the city of his birth.

Verse 4.—"*And Joseph also went . . . out of . . . Nazareth, into . . . the city of David . . . called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David).*" Being a direct descendant of the royal Davidic family, Joseph was obliged to journey to David's city, Bethlehem.

Verse 5.—"*To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*" Mary, whom Joseph had married under the direction of the angel of the Lord, accompanied him on the long southerly journey.

Verse 6.—"*And . . . while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.*" The divine arrangement of circumstances was so precise. The Prophet Micah had pinpointed this very town as the place of the Messiah's birth.

Verse 7.—"*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*" "Firstborn" could certainly imply that Mary later bore other sons, and the record of the Gospels confirms this (see Matt. 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3). Wrapping her newly born infant in swaddling bands, Mary laid Him in a crib where animals fed. Even to this day many of the humbler homes and shops of Bethlehem are built over caves, and in former times cattle were kept in these caves. Probably Mary and Joseph were occupying one of these small houses.

Verse 8.—"*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*" Somewhere in one of the adjacent fields was a party of shepherds. They were bivouacking, for apparently the weather was mild. Armed with rod and staff, they took turns circling their flock of sheep, guarding them from poachers or predatory animals.

Verse 9.—"*And, lo, the angel of the*

Comfort for Dark Days

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103:12).

Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid." It is more accurately "*an* angel." With him was an amazing glow of glory, probably the bright cloud that indicated in former days Jehovah's presence with Israel (see Exod. 13:21, 22). But these pious shepherds had never before seen this, and hence were filled with dread.

Verse 10.—*"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."* It is astonishing that it was not to kings but to obscure shepherds that the Evangel first came. Their dread was baseless, for here was exceedingly joyous news. And it was directed to not them only but to all men everywhere.

Verse 11.—*"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."* In full harmony with David's ancestral home, the Son of David was born there. He is not only King, however, but Saviour as well, for man was spiritually lost. This Saviour-King was none other than the Messiah (that is, Christ) and Lord.

Verse 12.—*"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."* The sign was not the swaddling clothes that clothed the holy infant, for that was a common sight. Rather, it was the touching sight that such a glorious prince should be cradled in a manger. That would be exceptional for *any* babe, to say nothing of an heir to David's royal throne.

Verse 13.—*"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying."* If earth is gripped by the silence of indifference, Heaven is certainly not. The angelic choir releases its crescendo of praise to God. This outburst must have far transcended their worship when they "sang together" at creation's morning (see Job 38:7).

Verse 14.—*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* Observe that God's glory comes first; man's blessing second. The Lord Jesus came into manhood primarily for the glory of God. That being secured, peace and blessing becomes available to man.

Verse 15.—*". . . as the angels were gone away . . . into heaven, the shepherds said . . . Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."* That the shepherds fully believed the report is quite clear from their immediate proposal. Note their words, "which is come to pass." Furthermore, they recognized that it was the *Lord* who had spoken unto them. This is genuine faith.

Verse 16.—*"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."* Expediency might have decided in favor of waiting until at least the next day. But no; they hurried at once to the town, and found the report true in every detail. Their faith and action were abundantly rewarded.

Last Week's Lesson

12. December 17.—Growth Through Adoration. .....Luke 1:26-80

Next Week's Lesson

14. December 31.—Growth Toward Christian Maturity. 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 4:11-24

The Heart of the Lesson

The advent of the Lord Jesus combined dignity and glory with deepest humility and grace. He was perfectly divine and yet perfectly human, both Son of God and Son of man.

Matthew's account stresses the fact that He was the divine King. Both creation (the star) and revelation (the Scriptures), bore witness to this (see Matt. 2:2, 5, 6). And yet, despite these powerful witnesses, human opposition flared up. While the scribes were too utterly indifferent to travel the six or seven miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to ascertain if the prophecy of Micah, which they could readily quote, had been fulfilled, the brutal Herod and his court plotted His assassination! But against this somber background God saw to it that His Son was not only acknowledged but adored. And so the Oriental philosophers bowed in worship and presented their gifts.

Luke's account stresses the humanity of our Lord. His manhood was perfectly sinless, despite the fact that His genealogy contained the names of four Old Testament women—Thamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba—three of whom had foul stains against their characters. Hence with an ancestry so tainted, it would have been impossible for the sinless nature of Jesus to be produced had it not been for His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit.

In the birth of Jesus Christ several great lines of sacred prophecy converged. He was born of the right person—a pure virgin; He was born in the right place—Bethlehem. Furthermore, He was born in the right role—One of whom the Prophet Isaiah had earlier declared, "He is despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). But while there was no room for Him in either the inn or in the official life of the nation, there *was* room for Him in the affections of a handful of truly wise men and also believing peasants.

Outline of the Lesson

1. The adoration of the Wise Men (Matt. 2:1-12)
2. The incarnation of God's Son (Luke 2:1-7)
3. The proclamation of the angels (vv. 8-14)
4. The investigation of the shepherds (vv. 15-20)

Topics for Development

The Sovereign God and Godless Rulers. Our lesson today reveals, among other important matters, the fact that the Almighty God sovereignly works out His purposes among men despite human wickedness. Having pledged Himself to fulfill His own promises to the most minute detail, He sometimes uses men who do not know Him, or who even resist His truth. We see an example of this in His causing the Roman Emperor to issue the decree that brought Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem in order that the Christ should be born there.

There are several other examples of this in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Take the wicked Pharaoh, for example. "For this cause have I raised thee up, [made thee to stand, A.S.V.] for to shew in thee my power," declared God (Exod. 9:16). The ruler of Egypt was personally accountable for his own actions, but Jehovah endured his insolence with the view toward making known to the ends of the earth His own glory and might. The same was true of Nebuchadnezzar, who is acknowledged by the Lord God as "my servant" (see Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). And still another example of this is seen in the overthrow of Israel's northern kingdom by the cruel Assyrian invaders, resulting in the removal of the ten tribes from their land (see 2 Kings 17:18-23). This was the Lord's doing. He permitted and overruled the entire sad operation.

In the days of our Lord we are startled to hear the wicked high priest Caiaphas uttering a prophecy the full significance of which he was totally unaware. Read and ponder the account as recorded in John 11:47-52.

Can you suggest examples of this principle in our own day?

Practical Applications

Those humble shepherds that tended their sheep on the outskirts of Bethlehem that night can bring us all some helpful messages.

Questions for Teacher and Class

By C. Ernest Tatham

WHAT was Herod's emotional reaction when he heard of the birth of Jesus?

2. What prophet had predicted Bethlehem as Messiah's birthplace?

3. How had he described the office and position of the One born there?

4. What three gifts did the Wise Men present?

5. Who was the great ancestor of Joseph and Mary?

6. What sign was given to the astonished shepherds?

7. How did the shepherds show their faith in the message that they had heard?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How would you have reacted to the message of the angels? Why?

2. Why does the world not have the peace announced at the birth of Christ?

3. What are the implications of our Lord being Son of David?

(Answers on page 986)

To begin with, when first they saw the glory of the Lord, they were afraid. This is usually the case. When the sinner is awakened to the fact that he has to do with the holy God, he is usually alarmed. This is a wholesome attitude, for it indicates an awareness of sin and an unfitness for the divine presence. Only to those who know their need because of the conviction of the Spirit of God will the Gospel come as "good tidings of great joy" with its assuring "fear not."

The shepherds not only heard and saw; they *came*. And they came believingly. They did not say, "Let us now go unto Bethlehem, and see *if* this thing has come to pass," but rather, "Let us . . . go . . . and see this thing which *is* come to pass" (2:15). There was no doubt whatever in their minds. Have *we* seen? Have *we* come? Have *we* believed the Word of the Lord? If so, then we will take the next step. This step is the telling of others. This is what the shepherds did. They made known abroad the Good News. And the result was that all who heard "wondered."

To tell others about our meeting with the Lord Jesus requires no special training. This is witnessing, not formal preaching. The world today wallows in hopeless confusion and ignorance. If we know the Son of God as our own Saviour, and are enjoying His salvation, we have the very story to tell that the world waits to hear.

Golden Text

Luke 2:10, 11.—*"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."* This is the first real Gospel message and it was proclaimed by angels to a congregation of humble shepherds. The Old Testament had anticipated that the Son of David *would* be born, but only on that night could it be said that He *is* born. And this Son of David is the true Messiah, that is the Christ. But He is also Lord of glory, and the only Saviour of men.

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From the Platform

By Joseph Edwin Harris

SUGGESTED HYMNS

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"
"While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks"
"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

A Prayer Before the Lesson.—O God, our Father, we thank Thee for sending Thy dear Son to save His people from their sins. We thank Thee, too, for all who have been His people in earlier days and for what we owe to Him and to them. Make us willing to be of Christ's people in this day. Help us to bear our witness to Him in clean lives, fair dealing, loving words, and kind deeds. Bless us as homes and families through this Christmas season with the harmony and happy fellowship of Christ-centered homes. Make us mindful of others less blessed than we are and ready to do for them what Thou wouldst have us do. For all who suffer we pray that they may have Thy support and help till brighter days come. May people everywhere come to see the greatness of Thy love in giving Thy Son to be our Saviour and may hearts in every place open to Him. Forgive us our sins and strengthen us to overcome our faults and serve Thee better, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FOR THE BLACKBOARD

The Shepherds Too Were Wise

THEY HEARD ABOUT
SOUGHT AFTER
TOLD ABOUT HIM

After the Lesson.—So excitingly significant was the coming of Christ that the angels broke through the screen of invisibility that usually hides them to tell men the wonderful news of the Saviour's birth. But they chose to appear to a few lowly shepherds, not to the great ones of the time. Let us notice some things about those shepherds.

On hearing the good tidings of the Saviour's birth, such was their interest that they went at once to Bethlehem to see what had come to pass. They did not rest content with hearing about the Saviour; they sought and found Him for themselves. Have we done that? We all need the Lord Jesus, and if we have never sought and found Him for ourselves, let us take time now to do this most important thing. Turn from all that holds you back from Christ and gladden both His heart and your own by seeking and trusting Him as your Saviour and Lord.

Then, having found the Lord Jesus themselves, these men passed on the good tidings about Him to others. We, too, should do that, once we have found Him as our own Saviour. Nor do we need to be preachers to do it. A Christian man in the biscuit making business in Hong Kong sold his products in several lands in the Far East. Anxious to share Christ with others, this man had a printed slip put in each tin of biscuits with these words in four languages: "Jesus said, I am the Bread of Life." That was his way of making known the good tidings and it brought him hundreds of letters asking for more information about Christ.

Where do we stand? We have all heard about the Saviour. Have we moved on to seeking Him for ourself? If we have, and He is now our Saviour and Lord, what are we doing to make Him known to others?

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The Busy Men's Corner

By Tom M. Olson

". . . there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus" (Luke 2:1).—See in this instance how the Lord could make the head of the Roman Empire a link in a chain of circumstances leading to the fulfillment of a prophecy (Mic. 5:2), given seven hundred years before!

The issuing of the decree led to the removal of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where the Saviour was to be born. God's purpose in the decree was fulfilled although the enforcing of it was not until sometime later, "when Cyrenius was governor of Syria."

God's purpose is like the tide of the sea. No matter how the waves act, the tide is sure to win. A poet—to me unknown—has written:

On the far reef the breakers
Recoil in shattered foam,
Yet still the sea behind them
Urges its forces home;
Its chant of triumph surges
Through all the thunderous din—
The wave may break in failure,
But the tide is sure to win.

"And Joseph . . . was of the house and lineage of David" (Luke 2:4).—Although Joseph was a humble, provincial carpenter, he was of the house and family of David.

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the fact that in this age of grace "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

I have read that "Billows of the sea are incompetent to produce effects, which are readily produced by ripples." So, if you are not a billow in your own estimation, be content to be used of the Lord as a ripple.

". . . the days were accomplished that she should be delivered" (Luke 2:6).—"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. 4:4, 5). "God never is before His time; and never is behind."

". . . there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).—King Solomon said: "Money answereth all things" (Eccles. 10:19). If Joseph and Mary had been rich, in all likelihood the innkeeper or his wife or someone else would have found room in a dwelling for them.

What room is there for the Christ of God in the palaces of pleasure, unless they can secure money by making favorable mention of Him? What room is there for the virgin-born Christ in

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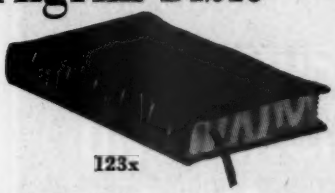

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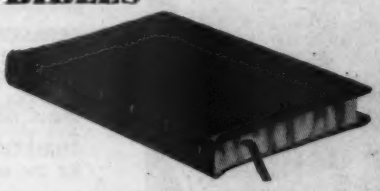

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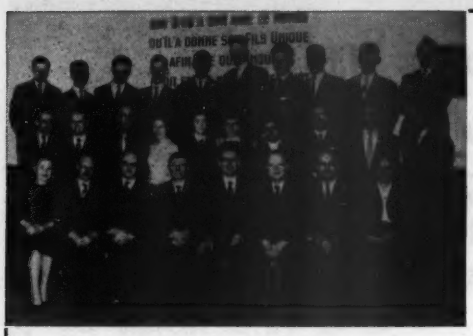

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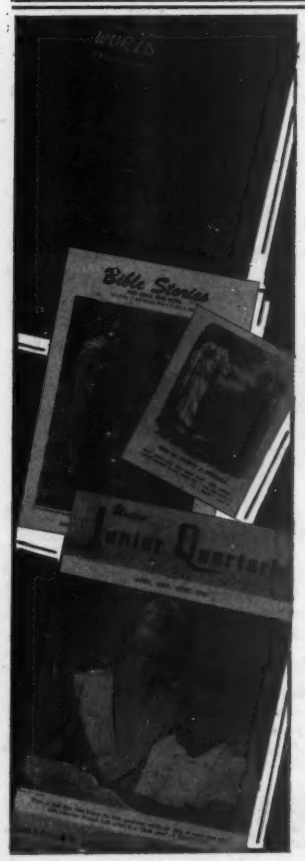

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the popular church of the day? What room is there for the One who is very God, as well as man, in the cults today? And what room in the heart and life of an unsaved person for God, the Son?

> Room for pleasure, room for business,
> But for Christ the crucified,
> Not a place that He can enter,
> In the heart for which He died?

All who have not received the Lord Jesus as yet, would do well to heed the words of J. B. Atchison who wrote:

> Now admit the heavenly guest,
> Let Him in;
> He will make for you a feast,
> Let Him in;
> He will speak your sins forgiven,
> And when earth ties all are riv'n,
> He will take you home to Heaven;
> Let Him in!

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them" (Luke 2:9).—It was fitting that the first announcement of the birth of Him who was to present Himself as the "good Shepherd [that] giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11) should be made to godly shepherds. We say "godly," for we conclude from the recorded words and actions that they were of that group in Israel who looked for the coming of the Messiah.

"I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10).—The good tidings concerned the birth of a Saviour. Israel had had a lawgiver, priests, judges, and kings; but not a Saviour like unto the Lord Jesus Christ. But now Jehovah-Saviour was in their midst. He could save them from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

Israel as a nation rejected Him; so He is now being presented to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46, 47). It is lamentable that so many Gentiles are either neglecting, despising, or rejecting Him. But those who do receive Him experience "great joy."

"Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14).—Sin had robbed God of the glory that was His due. And sin robbed man of peace. But now that Christ has come, God can be glorified in a manner never possible before. "And on earth peace, good pleasure among men"—as it is sometimes rendered. "Peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), and "the peace of God" (Phil. 4:6, 7). See also John 14:27.

WAWONA, CALIF.

My Teen-Age Class

By Vivian D. Gunderson

THERE have been many great men in this world. Some of them have their birthdays celebrated in their respective nations. But there is one celebrated around the world. No one else was ever born like the Baby Jesus, who was *God* manifest in flesh. Of Him the angel said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to

all people." The news of Jesus' birth was indeed tidings of great joy, for it meant that anyone willing to accept Him as Saviour could escape hell and have a wonderful Friend to lead him all through life, and bring him safe to Heaven. This gracious offer is made to all, but some do not get the good of it. We will meet some who did, and others who did not in today's lesson.

First we will read Matthew 2:1-12. Verse 10 tells us that the Wise Men from the East, seeking the baby King, rejoiced with "exceeding great joy" when they found Him. They had heard the news of His birth, believed it, and took the long journey to Israel's land to worship Him.

But King Herod and the city of Jerusalem were troubled by this news because they feared that Christ's coming might expose their sinful lives. Herod thought so much more of his position than he did of the Saviour, that he did his utmost to destroy Him. Herod hated Christ. All those who hate the Saviour will go to hell.

Turn next to Luke 2:1-20. Here we have the silent night, the godly shepherds, the burst of light, the angel's message, the rejoicing shepherds, who believed the message and went immediately to find the Saviour. But read verses 17-19 again. We would suppose that everyone who heard the news from the shepherds would have hurried to worship the wonderful Babe, full of joy at His birth. Apparently not. They seem to have wondered about it a little, then relapsed into indifference. In contrast, Mary remembered all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Now read verses 25-32. Here is another filled with joy at Jesus' birth. Godly old Simeon lived in Jerusalem, and was waiting for the coming of Christ. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen Him. The Holy Spirit led Simeon into the Temple at the very time Mary and Joseph were there with the Baby Jesus. Simeon recognized this Holy Babe as the One who would be the Saviour of the world. He took Him in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace . . . for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He said that the Child in his arms would be "a light to . . . the Gentiles, and the glory [of the nation of] . . . Israel."

We have read both Matthew's and Luke's record of the birth of Christ, and how different people received the news of it, some with hatred, some with indifference, some with great joy.

In 1961 there are still these three classes of people, even among those who celebrate His birth. The mother of one of my pupils invited me to her home and was most cordial until I said something about the Saviour. Her face hardened immediately at the mention of that precious name. Although she gives Christmas presents, she evidently hates the Saviour whose birth she is supposed to be celebrating. How tragic this is! If she continues in this spirit,

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she will have to spend eternity in hell with Herod and all those like him.

Many others celebrate Christmas who are *indifferent* to the One whose birthday they are supposed to be celebrating. The sad part is that those indifferent to Christ will have to spend eternity in the same place as those that hate Him! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3.)

But there are also people living today who thank God from the bottom of their hearts that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Last summer when my brother and I were traveling, we met people who also love our Lord. Immediately a love sprang up between us, and we "visited" like old friends.

The Saviour really came to Bethlehem. All that the Bible says of Him is true. Millions of people in the world today can testify to this. Believing the good tidings that the angel told the shepherds, Christians today rejoice in knowing that same Saviour. Some day they will rejoice still more when they see Him face to face in Heaven. Are you indifferent to the angel's message, or are you rejoicing in it?

FERNDALE, WASH.

The Illustration Round Table

Rules for submitting illustrations for this department may be had upon request from the Editors, The Sunday School Times, 325 N. 13th St., Philadelphia 5.

A list of the lessons for the year 1962 may be had for 20 cents a copy, or $2 a dozen, postpaid, from the same address.

Not the Rent Collector.—*I bring you good tidings of great joy* (Luke 2:10, Golden Text). Charles Haddon Spurgeon used to tell a story of a minister visiting an old woman who was a member of his church, in order to bring her a gift of money which she badly needed. He knocked at her door several times, but with no response, and he had to go away disappointed with the gift still in his pocket. Meeting her a few days later, he told her of his fruitless visit. She replied with tears in her eyes that she had heard him knocking but thought it was the rent collector, and she dared not open the door, for she had not the money to pay the rent. Spurgeon used this as an illustration of the Gospel. He who stands at the door and knocks has come with a gift: the knock is a Saviour's knock, not that of a taskmaster. The Gospel is good news; news not of rent required, but of a debt paid; not a demand, but a free gift which none has deserved or could win by merit, but which is offered to all.—*From The Expositor. Sent by J. A. Clark, Rhos-on-Sea, Colwyn Bay, N. Wales, Eng. Prize illustration.*

The "Little" That Counts.—*And it came to pass in those days* (Luke 2:1). A great Christian confessed that when he was a child, he knew so little, he believed the Christmas story just as Luke had written it. Then came a time when he knew so much—after studying higher criticism, comparative religion, and philosophy—that he could not believe the miraculous setting of the story. But now, once again, he knows so little that he believes the story of Christmas just as Luke tells it. —*From a Lutheran Hour address by the Rev. Armin C. Oldsen. Sent by Grace Robinson, Topeka, Kans.*

In a Communist Jail.—*She . . . laid him in a manger* (Luke 2:7). In Geoffrey Bull's wonderful book, *When Iron Gates Yield*, he describes spending Christmas Eve in a Tibetan inn as a prisoner on his way to a Communist jail. He went into the stable to feed the horses. He says, "My boots squelched in the manure and straw on the floor and the fetid smell of the animals was nauseating. I felt my way among the mules and horses, expecting to be kicked any moment. What a place, I thought. . . . To think that my Saviour was born in a place like this. To think that He came all the way from Heaven to some wretched eastern stable, and what is more, to think that He came for me. How men beautify the cross and crib, as if to hide the fact that at birth we resigned Him to the stench of beasts and at death exposed Him to the shame of rogues! God forgive us.

Love to the uttermost, love to the uttermost,
Love past all measuring His love must be;
From Heaven's highest glory to earth's deepest shame,
This is the love of my Saviour to me.

I returned to the warm, clean room, which I enjoyed even as a prisoner, bowed in thankfulness and worship.—*Sent by Elisabeth Edmunds, Hailsham, Sussex, Eng.*

Things Not Realized Before.—*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord* (Luke 2:11, Golden Text). A Christian family, passing through a time of much trouble, were praying but not rejoicing. Although the youngest boy of the family could not understand all the difficulties, he felt the gloom. One day as his oldest sister was working about the house, he said, "I wish you would sing something. Couldn't you sing 'Praise the Saviour'?" Suddenly the sister realized that though she could not sing a song like "I am so happy in Christ today," she *could* sing "Praise the Saviour." So they sang it together, and went from one song of praise to another. It was wonderful how the atmosphere of the home brightened. They had planned to let Christmas pass as an ordinary day because there was no money for any celebration. But now they decided to get a tree from the nearby woods, and to hang on it a list of the things the Lord had already given them. The tree was decorated with everything they could think of that took no money, then they all searched their Bibles for

verses about God's gifts to us. These were hung on the tree, and Christmas Day were distributed and read aloud. Everyone was filled with praise to God, for they found He had given them things not realized before. An unsaved friend was there that day, and was much impressed. She drew the older girl aside and asked, "Why is it that you get so much more out of your religion than I do? As far as I know, I believe everything you do—everything in the Bible." The older girl said, "For whom do you think Christ died?" "I believe He died for all." "Do you believe it was for *you*, because of *your* sins?" She answered, "I never thought of it that way before." The home girl said, "I think that is what makes the difference."—*From Vivian D. Gunderson in The Sunday School Times. Sent by Albert Mygatt, Blue Springs, Nebr.*

A More Far-Reaching Peace.—*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men* (Luke 2:14). Toward the close of the War of 1812 the country was shrouded in deep gloom; the harbors were blockaded, commerce destroyed, produce mouldering in the warehouses, the currency depreciated. In February a ship drew near to New York, bringing the commissioners from Ghent, and the news that the treaty of peace was signed. From house to house, from street to street, amid waving torches, all went shouting, "Peace, peace!" More joyful is the news of peace brought from God by the angels. We, too, should not keep silence, but repeat the news of peace till all the world shall hear.—*From Biblical Encyclopedia. Sent by Mrs. A. E. Janzen, Hillsboro, Kans.*

The Babe in a Modern Tavern.—*Let us now go even unto Bethlehem* (Luke 2:15). The man was brought up in a good Christian home. He was able and well trained and was very active in church work for a number of years. Then came the great depression, and he lost his job. Before long he also lost interest in his church. Utterly impoverished and frustrated, he resorted to the most shameful means of earning a living for himself and his family. Heavy fines were imposed upon him for operating a disorderly tavern, and more than once his tavern was closed by the police. The pastor and the elders of the nearby congregation visited him again and again. They did everything in their power to bring him to his senses by pointing out how flagrantly he was transgressing the divine Law. But all their efforts were futile. The man had turned into an avowed infidel and scoffer. Then came the change. On Christmas Eve two lay members of the congregation visited him in his tavern, cordially wishing him and his family the benedictions of Christmas, and in simple language, reminded him of the Babe of Bethlehem. That did it. Face to face once more with the wonderful love of God in Jesus Christ, this hardened sinner broke down and wept bitter tears of repentance. Once more the love of God had conquered. The Saviour, who nineteen centuries before was born in a stable at Bethlehem, had knocked at the door of a wretched roadhouse, and found lodging in a human heart.—*From Dr. E. J. Friedrich. Sent by Grace Robinson, Topeka, Kans.*

The Child Was Missing.—*They . . . found . . . the babe* (Luke 2:16). A little Arab refugee boy had been taken into an English home and cared for. He was told the story of Christmas, and all about the Baby born in a manger. Naturally he looked forward to the coming of the season with great expectations. Thinking to please him, his adoptive parents took him to one of the great London stores which had a special department for children. The little fellow's deep brown eyes opened in wonder and amazement as he gazed upon the toys and attractions, and he stood bereft of speech in the presence of Santa Claus. Suddenly the little lad began to search for something. "Where is the CHILD?" he asked. "The child?" asked his foster mother. "Yes, Baby Jesus," said the boy, "where is He?" The boy had been taught that Christmas meant Jesus—but there was no Jesus. Amid all the festivities of the season we should be careful lest we miss the Holy Child.—*From The Methodist Recorder. Sent by J. A. Clark, Rhos-on-Sea, Colwyn Bay, N. Wales, Eng.*

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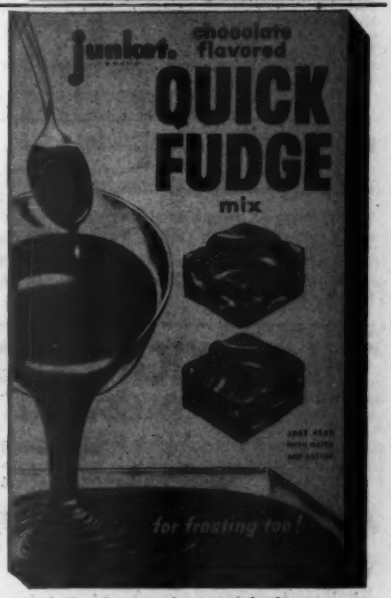

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This Week's Questions Answered

(The questions are on page 979)

1. He was troubled.
2. Micah.
3. Governor or ruler (see Matt. 2:6).
4. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
5. David.
6. The Babe would be lying in a manger.
7. They went with haste to Bethlehem to see the sight.

NORTH PALM BEACH, FLA.

For Junior Teachers

By Ruth E. Dow

Great Joy
(Matt. 2:1-12)

THE day before Christmas! How excited you are! Programs and Christmas trees! Presents! Good things to eat!

Was there excitement the first Christmas? In Nazareth? How excited Mary must have been when the angel told her that she was chosen, among all the women who ever lived, to be the mother of the Lord Jesus, God's Son, the great King forever! Let us read again her song of great joy as she talked with Cousin Elisabeth about it (Luke 1:46-55).

Was there excitement in Heaven the night the little Lord Jesus was born? Perhaps the angels could hardly believe their eyes and ears that God's own Son, the Prince of Heaven, living in glory with all the angels to wait on Him and praise Him, should give it all up to go down to live with people on earth, go down to be a tiny baby born in a barn. What a wonderful, loving God to do it for them! And the angels, knowing why the Baby had come and what He would do for us, sang their song of great joy: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14, Memory Verse).

Was there excitement in Bethlehem? The noise and loud talking of the crowds as they poured into the little city to sign up for taxes! Relative meeting relative! Friend greeting friend! Curses on Herod and his government! Curses on Rome and the taxes! But those crowds knew nothing of what was happening in the stable that night. Just as many in the Christmas excitement now know nothing of what the Christmas Baby really means.

Was there excitement on the hills outside Bethlehem, where shepherds dozed with their sheep? Sudden glory, a flashing angel, news that Christ was born, the angel chorus of praise from the skies! Indeed, the shepherds ran in their excitement to go find the Baby Jesus.

Some time later there was great excitement in Jerusalem. Princes from far away on richly harnessed camels! Looking for a new king—a king of the Jews, who had just been born! There was excitement in King Herod's palace, too! What! A new king born! Who? Where? Herod must find out—quickly—and get rid of Him! (Read Matt. 2:1-8.) There was excitement and joy on the road from Jerusalem when the Wise Men found God's star guiding them right to the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem. (Read vv. 9, 10.)

Excitement in Bethlehem now! The princely strangers walking up to the door of the house where Mary and Joseph were staying! Servants carrying the princes' elegant gifts! How must Mary have felt when she saw the richly dressed strangers from far lands kneel and bow down before her baby Son? When the gifts in the ivory and golden boxes were opened? Gold—money! Frankincense and myrrh—expensive gifts, treasures for kings and princes! For her little Son! What strange and wonderful things God was doing! (Read v. 11.)

Is there excitement and joy in our hearts today that the little Lord Jesus came to be our Saviour? Let us love Him and praise Him more than the brightly lighted Christmas trees, more than Christmas dinner and candy, more than the long-wished-for present we receive!

For this lesson use a series of pictures as you describe the excitement of the various episodes. For the last, make a scene of boys and girls looking at the baby in the manger in the foreground. Place in the background a Christmas tree, dolls, bicycle, gifts, also a family at dinner. If your series of pictures are of approximately the same size and can be mounted on cardboard, fasten the edges one to another with tape or string so they will stand on a table or hang on the wall.

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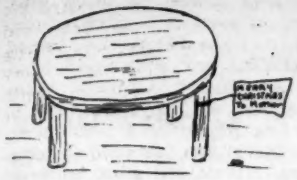

Mother's Christmas Present

A story of Korea for children

By ESTHER MILLER PAYLER

"WOULD you want to come to our wood work shop at the mission? One of our boys is going to Seoul to work, so he must quit," said Chung's friend, Phai.

Chung's black eyes sparkled: "If only they will take me! I go to Sunday school, but so far there's been no room in the shop for another boy!"

That evening Chung went with Phai. "We must run and get there early before others come," said Phai.

The boys ran to the mission house so fast that when they got there they could hardly breathe. "Some boys are ahead of us!" said Phai.

Chung felt like he was crying inside. "I waited so long to get in," he said to Phai. "I can wait again if I have to, but this time I thought I'd make it!"

Phai whispered: "Wait. See what the missionary says. Don't go home Chung!"

"Good evening Phai and Chung," said Mr. Ward, the missionary.

"We thought maybe I could get into the shop," said Chung.

"I'm sorry. We have no more tools now, but Chung you stay and watch and help as you can with sanding, varnishing, and painting. Then you would be the next one to get tools," said Mr. Ward.

"Yes, sir," answered Chung. He came regularly and worked hard.

The boys made boxes and buckets of different sizes. Some made stools and chairs. Part of the things the boys made they took home. Some were sold so new materials could be bought. "My fingers itch for the tools," said Chung.

He and Phai went early as they could each evening. Sometimes one of the boys was not there or was late and Chung worked awhile. Mr. Ward and Phai helped him.

"If only I could make a stool for my mother's Christmas present," said Chung, his fingers smoothing the finish of one Phai made.

"Save some *hwan* [coins] for wood and I'll help you make it," said Phai.

"We'll give you the wood for less than cost," said Mr. Ward, who overheard.

Every time Chung got a few *hwan* saved, food or clothing were needed at home, so he gave the money to his mother.

One evening Mr. Ward said: "Chung, if you'll take your wheelbarrow to the wood merchants and bring us a load of wood tomorrow evening, I'll pay you with the wood for a stool."

"Thank you, I'll be glad to," replied Chung. All day he sang at his work, thinking how happy his mother would be with a stool. He would have to hurry for there were only two more weeks in which to get it done. Since the war his mother had been a poor widow. In spite of working day and night, she could not earn enough with Chung's help to keep the family fed and clothed. She missed the furniture she had been forced to sell, but talked mostly of the stool she used to sit on.

Chung told his mother in the morning: "I'll need our wheelbarrow this evening to get wood for Mr. Ward. I'll be paid in wood." He smiled to himself thinking of his secret.

When Chung came home from work his mother was not home. The wheelbarrow was not around. His little sister said: "Younger Brother is hauling bags of rice for the food merchant. He said he'd be home before you got here."

It was almost dark. Younger Brother was not at home with the wheelbarrow. Chung ran to the merchant's shop. "Your brother has not come back," he said. Chung waited. Every minute seems an hour, he thought. At last his brother came back.

"The wheel's broken!" he cried.

Chung with a heavy heart, worked with the wheel, until he got it fixed and then hurried to the wood merchant. When Chung was waiting for the order to be ready, he was standing by himself in a big room piled high with wood. "I could put some pieces in my blouse. The merchant would not miss them! Then I could get dumplings and soup for Mother's supper, too!"

Chung snatched two pieces of wood and put them in his blouse. "Thou shalt not steal," the Sunday school teacher read from the Bible last Sunday.

Chung slipped the wood out and put it back on the pile. He sang as he wheeled the wood to the mission. "If only the wheel holds," he kept saying as it wobbled.

Mr. Ward was pleased with Chung for bringing the wood. "Here is your wood for the stool," he smiled.

"I'll help you as much as I can," promised Phai. Mr. Ward helped, too.

As Chung worked, one leg split. "Here's one," said Phai.

The shop had a rush order for chairs for a school. Phai and Chung worked late to help. "My stool," sighed Chung. "It won't be done in time."

The day before Christmas Chung varnished the stool. "It'll be dry in time," said Mr. Ward, smiling. "You've done a fine job."

"Thanks to you and Phai," answered Chung.

The next day Chung stopped at the mission to get his stool. It was not where he had left it. Chung's heart stood still. "Mr. Ward has it in his

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house," he was told. "Please stop there."

Trembling, Chung knocked at the mission door. Mr. Ward opened the door and invited him in. How good the house smelled of cooking soup! It made hungry Chung's mouth water. Mr. Ward handed Chung the stool and a bucket with a lid: "Careful, don't spill," said Mr. Ward. "That's a surprise for your Christmas supper."

Chung stopped in at Phai's house. "Phai, go home with me. If it had not been for you the stool wouldn't have been."

Phai carried the stool. Chung the soup. Chung said to his mother: "I made this for your Christmas present. Phai helped."

Her sad eyes lighted. She laughed and cried. "My son!" she said. "God has been good to give me such a son."

"Mrs. Ward sent us a Christmas supper," said Chung, handing her the bucket. "I brought Phai to share it." The children looked and sniffed as the fragrant steam rose from the bucket. "Beef soup with dumplings of bean-curd, vegetables and meat! Our favorite," smiled Mother.

She dished the soup so each child had some in his bowl and two dumplings. As Chung said grace he thanked God that he had not stolen to get this treat.

Mother sat on her stool and smiled as she ate the soup. She said: "Praise God!" and Chung also said it in his heart for more than soup.

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YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

Because It's Christmas

(Sunday, December 24; Luke 2:7-19)

By JOHN W. LANE, Jr.

IF AT any time of the year hearts are tender and forgiving and loving and generous, it is during the Christmas season. We see this in a thousand ways if we look for it. Even those who at other times show little sympathy or consideration for their fellow men, unbend a little at Christmas time, almost, as it were, against their wills, in little acts of kindness and good will, just "because it's Christmas." God help the one who feels no stir of warmth at Christmas time!

Now, why is this? We who are sincere Christians know that the coming to this earth of the Lord Jesus as a little babe is one of the great evidences of God's love and good will toward men. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). It is not strange that "we love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19), for "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (1 John 4:16). The commemoration of His birth to us is a joyous and blessed time.

But what about those who have not believed, who deny that there is a loving God, or who hold that Christ was not God's Son, sent to redeem fallen man, but only a great teacher? Why do many of these give gifts and do kindly deeds at Christmas time? Is it not because, somehow, the gratitude and love that Christians feel and show, especially at this time of year, rubs off a bit and works its way into indifferent, hard, and unbelieving hearts, in spite of their unbelief?

If this is true, is it not a great challenge to those of us who love Christ and seek to serve Him? Dare we, in all our preparation for and participation in this blessed Christmas season, do anything that falls short or is unworthy of the true meaning of Christmas? Dare we miss the opportunity, when many hearts are softened, of giving a sincere and consistent Christian witness for Christ by our deeds as well as by our words?

It has been suggested that two lists might be made by your group in this meeting just before Christmas Day—one list to show things that have been done thus far that have had little or no bearing on the real meaning of Christmas. Perhaps gifts have been purchased out of a sense of duty, or to impress the receiver, or to curry favor. Perhaps elaborate plans have

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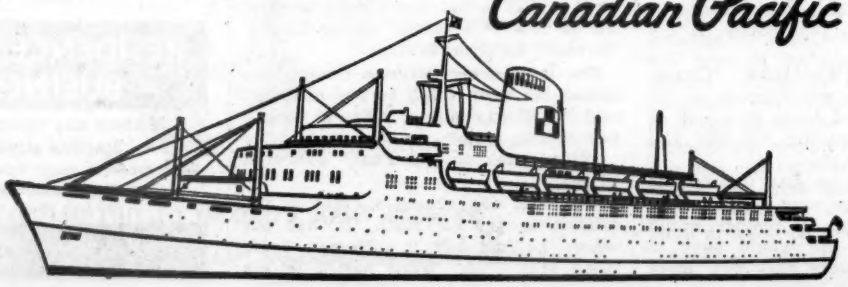

been made for selfish good times, in which Christ is to have no part. The second list should show what things have been done for or planned for others because of a real love for Christ in the heart, perhaps for those who cannot offer a return gift, and in ministering to them you are giving to Him and showing forth His love. Perhaps the preparation of such lists in a public meeting might be unwise or unduly embarrassing, but you might suggest that each member prepare his or her own lists, and thoughtfully and prayerfully study them, asking God to speak to each heart about them.

Certainly this meeting should not close without a time of quiet meditation with all eyes closed. "Silent Night" might be played very softly at this time and your pastor might be asked to close with a brief invitation to any who have never received the Lord Jesus as Saviour to do so right now, and to make the Christmas Day that follows the best they have ever known, and one which will bring rejoicing in the very presence of the angels (Luke 15:10).

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The Rapture First

(*Continued from page 977*)

formed by the construction of a great concrete dam, situated in a narrow neck of the gorge. In 1937 the river overflowed its banks and flooded the stores and business buildings in the heart of the community, as well as a great number of residences. That can never happen again. That is, unless an enemy should drop a bomb on Philpott Dam, or something comparable to that should take place. Should such a calamity occur probably more than half the community would be wiped out. So long as that dam remains intact there can be no flood disaster here.

In like manner, so long as the Church, the redeemed body of believers, remains upon earth there can be no period of unlimited destruction. How can there be a Tribulation as long as the Church is on earth? How can the rapture of the Church be such a glorious event if the Church must endure the wrath of God, even though she be protected, for which there seems to be no guarantee? Whittling it down to less than seven years, to months, or even to days, makes little difference—either God's people will be in it or out of it.

Paul says the true Christian is "looking for that blessed [happy] hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The very word *rapture*, which we have chosen for lack of a Biblical term to designate this glorious event, becomes a misnomer if the Church is to endure the rigors of the Tribulation. It is the very fact that God, in mercy and grace, has promised to deliver us from wrath and destruction that encourages our hearts and spurs us on to greater activity for Him, with purity of conduct. As time goes on and conditions continue to get worse, I find myself praying most fervently with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." On the other hand, if I thought for a moment that I would have to endure the Tribulation before that prayer could be answered, I could not voice that appeal sincerely or conscientiously. I am sure that I would be much more inclined to pray with the devout Simeon: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

If the Church must remain upon earth through the Tribulation, then the Rapture ceases to be a blessed hope and becomes a dreadful prospect. The imminency of His return is at once repudiated if the Church is not to be raptured before the Tribulation. Peg it down at any point that you may, there would be little uncertainty about His return. It would definitely not be the unexpected event indicated by the words of Jesus: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44).

The writer owes his own conversion to the faithful teaching of the truth of the Rapture. That same truth has been a source of tremendous encouragement through the years of my ministry, when the going was tough. It is the dynamic of the Church. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18). How can that statement be applied to anything but the imminent return of the Lord? What possible blessing or spiritual benefit can be derived from the theory that the Church must pass through the Tribulation? Just to realize that even before this manuscript is finished the Lord might come for His own, is a thrilling and inspiring thought. How greatly impoverished I would be without that truth. To be deprived of it would do irreparable harm.

I am fully aware of the fact that the things set forth in the earlier part of this treatment, as well as some of the foregoing conclusions, would not be sufficient in themselves to establish the doctrine of the imminent return of the Lord. However, the writer is fully convinced that this truth is definitely taught in the New Testament, and these practical thoughts corroborate and substantiate what is positively set forth by the apostles.

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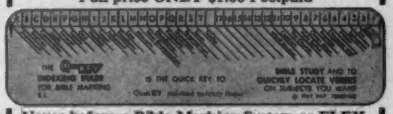

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December 18 to 24

Mon.—Luke 2:1-20.
The Angel's Glad Tidings.

It is probably fair to say that this passage contains the most beautiful story in the world, the record of the birth of Christ. Parents and teachers will do well to note the simplicity of it. In verses 8 to 20 there are just 273 words and only 56 of these are of more than one syllable. God used Caesar's decree to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, that Jesus might be born there according to prophecy. "There was no room for them in the inn" is one of the sad lines of the Bible, in fact, of all English literature. Is there room for the Lord in your heart? The angel's first words were, "Fear not," because Christ had come to forgive men's sins. Notice that in verse 11 three of His titles are used, speaking of Him as Rédeemer, Messiah, and Lord of all. The shepherds believed the heavenly message, and therefore saw the Lord Jesus. We may see Him by faith.

Tues.—Matthew 2:1-12.
Worship and Rejoicing.

About seven-hundred years before the birth of Christ, Micah spoke the words that are here quoted by the priests and scribes to Herod, concerning Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Saviour. Herod did not really want to worship Him, but was jealous of Him who was "born King of the Jews." The Wise Men from the East did not see the Babe in the manger but in a house, so their visit was later than that of the shepherds. Herod's plot was the Devil's first attempt to slay Christ, but God foiled this scheme by warning the Wise Men not to return to the king. As you study the life of Christ you will find other occasions on which Satan tried to kill Him. But he could not do it till the right time had come for Christ to die. Those who belong to the Lord are also protected and can say, "My times are in thy hand" (Psa. 31:15).

Wed.—Luke 2:25-35.
The Glory of Israel.

Four things are said of godly Simeon: he was "just," or righteous; "devout," that is, devoted to God; "waiting . . ." that is, looking for the Messiah; and he was filled with the Spirit. Every Christian should be marked by these same things. The Spirit gave a wonderful promise to Simeon and then led him so that he might see the child Jesus. Christ is the salvation given us by God, as Simeon said. Christ is the Light of the world, and He will enlighten us through His Word if we

open our hearts to Him. Though Simeon rejoiced with Mary and Joseph, yet he warned her that she would have sorrow because of her Son. Let us make sure we are among those for whom Christ is the Light and not a stumbling block.

Thurs.—Luke 2:36-40.
Giving Thanks Unto the Lord.

Simeon and Anna set us good examples, in that they were looking for the Messiah and praised God when they knew that He had come. We should be thankful every day that He came to be our Redeemer, and look forward eagerly to the time when He will come again as the King whose right it is to rule this world. The knowledge of His presence with us now, by His Spirit, and that He is coming to set up His righteous Kingdom can give us peace of mind even in the face of constant threats of war. Not only did Anna give thanks, but she witnessed to others of the Saviour, and this is what we also should do. Notice that the Lord Jesus grew as a normal boy, though He never sinned as all others do. What a constant joy He must have been to His mother and Joseph! In this He is an example to all children who love Him. Read 1 Peter 2:21.

Fri.—Matthew 2:13-23.
Guarding the Young Child.

Here we have another instance of Joseph's faith and obedience. He had taken special care of Mary when the angel of the Lord told him in a dream of the coming of Christ (1:24); now he believed the second message given in a dream and went at once into Egypt to protect the young Child. "Then was fulfilled" (v. 17): expressions like this occur often in Matthew, and his Gospel and Romans quote the Old Testament more than any other New Testament books. For the second time in this passage Joseph is given a message in a dream and obeys at once. And again we find the words, "that it might be fulfilled," in relation to Nazareth (v. 23). In this passage we see how carefully God provided for the protection of His Son, and also how closely linked are the Old and New Testaments.

Sat.—John 1:1-14.
The Word Became Flesh.

Three times we read "Word" in verse 1, suggesting the Trinity, that is, the three persons in the Godhead. It refers to Christ, and in Revelation 19:13 He is called "The Word of God." He was both life and light, which no mere man is in himself. "The darkness comprehended it not" means that the darkness of sin did not overcome Christ as the Light of the world. The man "whose name was John" was John the Baptist, not John, the writer of this Gospel. As he was a witness to the light, so we should also be in our smaller measure. Verse 11 means that Christ came to His own home or things, and His own people did not receive Him. But still today He gives the power, or right, or privilege, to them who believe on Him to become sons of God. Have you received Him into your heart?

Sun.—Matthew 1:18-25.
Jesus, the Saviour.

This is one of the two New Testament passages that make it perfectly clear that Christ was the Son of God, and not the son of Joseph. God's grace is shown by the fact that, when Joseph was troubled, the angel of the Lord was sent to him in a dream to reassure him by explaining just how Christ should be born. Note that again we find the phrase, "that it might be fulfilled," which is characteristic of Matthew's Gospel. The verse that applies most closely to our personal lives is the twenty-first: ". . . Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." He saves us from the penalty, or punishment of our sins; and wants to and is able to keep us from sinning here and now, if we will only trust and obey Him. With Paul we can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

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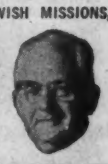

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